

No. 464 - Nov. 22, 1974

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## THE LABOR MOVEMENT IN JAPAN

### An Interview With Miyoko Shiozawa

While President Ford was busy meeting the Emperor and Prime Minister Tanaka on November 19, the daily routine of millions of Japanese was seriously affected by nation-wide strikes by major labor unions. The coordinated action showed the power of organized labor. But Westerners should be careful to understand the nature of this power, including its serious limitations, in Japan. For these purposes, JCAN interviewed Ms. Miyoko Shiozawa, a free-lance labor consultant, writer and lecturer. Ms. Shiozawa is a former YMCA secretary who set up recreation programs for women workers in the textile industry. She then worked for 15 years as a textile union organizer. One of her recent responsibilities was editing the Kyodan's monthly labor magazine, HATARAKUJITO. The following is Ms. Shiozawa's words as transcribed and edited by JCAN.

eds.

There are two major premises in trying to understand the Japanese labor movement. First, most Japanese enterprises employ workers for their lifetime. Once hired, a person is morally bound to pledge loyalty to the company. Most union are company unions, and union fees are automatically deducted from paychecks by the company management. In most cases, a worker does not personally decide to join the union. He or she automatically becomes a union member when employed by the company.

Secondly, there is the Japanese mentality-- the psychological and behavioral traits-- which provide the foundation of the above structure. In most general terms, Japanese society is structured by a series of master-subordinate relationships. The higher person must express benevolence to the lower person, and the lower person must express loyalty to the higher person. There are no truly democratic relations. Inside the companies this means that employees are basically at the mercy of the employers.

Given these factors, one can understand how the pre-war Establishment nipped in the bud any attempts at union organization. The situation changed markedly after 1945 when U.S. Occupation authorities encouraged Japanese enterprises to create unions. It is important to remember that most present-day unions are the product of this guidance from above, not a movement from the grassroots. But it is also true that in the immediate post-war period, a small but true labor movement did exist. It was worker-centered and was organized primarily by liberated communists. But in the late 1940's General MacArthur and the GPO ordered a forceful "red purge" which all but strangled this movement. By the end of the Korean War,

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Subscriptions: JAPAN ¥1,500; OVERSEAS Airmail \$ 8.00, Seamail \$6.00

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not only committed communists but also conscientious democrats had been purged by the authorities.

Despite the purge, a number of union leaders survived who had been impressed by the possibilities of more democratic unions. As these leaders proved a nuisance to management, companies devised means to divide and conquer the unions. The management tactic was to create puppet unions within the companies. To accomplish this, the companies sowed worker dissatisfaction with "ideologically-oriented union leaders" and appealed to that historic Japanese quality-- company loyalty.

Political Party Ties: Japanese labor unions first showed their united strength and their ability to threaten the government during the 1960 struggles over Ambo (the Japan-U.S. Security Pact). To my mind, however, the labor union movement has degenerated since then. One key factor here has been the adhesion of unions and progressive political parties: union leaders marshal collective union votes in exchange for influence in the opposition parties. Many union officials climb to political success through this channel. The ties are so close that any split in the political parties leads directly to a split in the unions.

Approximately 36 per cent of Japanese workers are organized. About 40 per cent of the organized workers are affiliated with *Sohyo*, which is tied to the Japan Socialist Party. *Domei*, the second largest national union group, is tied to the Democratic-Socialist Party. In the past few years a third group-- *Churitsuroren*--has sprung up and is attracting growing support from unions which cannot affiliate with either *Sohyo* or *Domei*.

*Sohyo's* major constituency consists of government employees, including two large unions--*Doro* and *Kokuro*--of workers of the Japan National Railways. Since these unions lack the right to strike, one of their common tactics in pressing demands is the *junpo toso* or "law-abiding struggle" in which trains are slowed down to meet trivial regulations otherwise neglected. When these unions do strike, as on November 19, the leaders are punished by the government.

The Bureaucracy and the People: There is no doubt that labor unions have helped workers to gain some tangible, visible goals--higher wages, shorter working hours, longer vacations and more holidays. But one major weakness of present labor unions is that, in the pursuit of these benefits, they have failed to seriously protect and advance the human rights of all workers. Japanese unions have never seriously fought for safety standards, health care, recreational programs or other less tangible goals. Union leaders tend to pay only lip-service to these concerns, increasing rank and file uneasiness and dissatisfaction.

Furthermore, the master-subordinate mentality has merged with the capitalist structure to exploit the weak. Today's unions tend to be large unions within big businesses, and they tend to take care of their own at the expense of unorganized and temporary workers. As union wages and benefits increase, companies simply hire more "temporary" workers to do the same jobs at lower pay--and the union doesn't protest. Neither do unions protest discrimination based on race, sex and age. In these regards the unions tend to simply reflect the values of the capitalist system and its preoccupation with profits.

These attitudes of union leaders have served to isolate them from the masses. The leaders are aware of this gap and attempted to fill it during this year's Shunto or "Spring Offensive". The April struggles were dubbed "People's Shunto" and included slogans opposing inflation and supporting an old age pension. Through these efforts, the unions tried to show that they work for all people's benefit. But most people were unimpressed by a small increase in the pension, and they felt they were being used as bait for the key union demand of 30 per cent wage increases.

Nevertheless, there are two hopeful signs in the labor movement recently. One was that *Doro* succeeded in early November in getting the JNR to speed-up its safety checks on Shinkansen (bullet train) lines. The other is that there is a growing movement to organize workers in medium and small enterprises. This movement is coming from below--from the workers--and is a hopeful sign for the larger Japanese labor movement.

What has the Christian church contributed to the labor movement? About

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ten years ago Dr. Mikio Sumiya, a Christian professor at Tokyo University, asked the secretary-general of *Sohyo* what the church could do to help the labor movement. The answer was blunt: "Please stay away from us and don't stand in our way." The gap between church and labor is big. Although some sincere and capable union leaders turn out to be Christian, there is little the church has done for the labor movement in general or for these men in particular. In fact, some Christian labor leaders tend to get less church support as their union activities grow. It is a tragedy to see such people cutting themselves off from, or being cut off by, the church.

Occasionally some young pastors become involved in the labor movement, but their idealism and naiveté usually causes them to stumble or waver when they encounter the political compromises that are basic to such a movement. As a result the church has contributed little of substance to the labor movement. The church must first become aware of its responsibility to support those in the labor movement.

--END--

### REFLECTIONS ON THE SEMINARY TRIAL

by Rev. Tsutomu Shoji

The Tokyo Theological Seminary trial concerns the arrest of three students in 1970 at the height of the student movement here. Students had been picketing the seminary campus and preventing the giving of entrance examinations as well as the holding of classes. Barricades were forcefully removed by riot police in March of 1970. However, before that time several faculty members had secretly made their houses available for the giving of entrance exams. One house was discovered, students broke in and abducted a faculty member whom they held for several hours, the university called in the police, and three participating students were arrested, charged, tried and finally sentenced. They appealed the verdict; recently the higher court handed down its decision.

The Kyodan seminary has been widely criticized in liberal church circles for its action ---- and vehemently supported in others. The 1973 Sokai (the Annual Assembly of the United Church of Christ in Japan) passed a resolution demanding that the seminary withdraw its charges against the students, but the seminary has so far refused to comply. (See JCAN #433, May 25, 1973, and #433, Nov. 30, 1973.) The issue is extremely complicated and tied to several others which are also emotion-laden.

Rev. Shoji serves as minister to the Toshima-ka-Oka Kyodan Church and also advises students as a live-in counselor at the YMCA dormitory near Taseda University. He has been a supporter of the arrested students since their case first went to court. He is widely known in Japan as a churchman very involved with social issues. These are his comments on the recent court decision and the case itself.

---eds.

On October 17 a decision was handed down by the High Court of Tokyo on the case of three Tokyo Union Theological Seminary students on trial since 1970 because of legal action instituted by the seminary. The students have been sentenced to four to six months' imprisonment with a two-year suspension, reducing by half the previous sentences of a lower court.

The judge's statements about the case also differ from the earlier decision. In the first trial the court admitted only testimony by faculty members, who spoke  
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for the prosecution. The students were charged simply with "breaking into private property." However, in hearing the appeal the High Court did not assume that the faculty was absolutely in the right, but stated that "the Court is not competent to judge the nature of the struggle between students and faculty of the Seminary." The faculty was also charged with partial responsibility for this "unfortunate incident."

The date of judgement had been postponed more than once by the request of the Court itself, possibly indicating a diversity of views among the judges on this complex issue. It is widely accepted that the case is in itself minor and that normally a verdict of guilty would be most unlikely. However, some here have feared the effects on other cases concerning the student struggle of a verdict of not guilty. This may help explain why the court reduced the sentence rather than reversing it and clearing the students' records.

The trial has wide implications for the Kyodan. Last year's General Assembly (Sokai) officially requested that the seminary withdraw its accusation, but the seminary rejected this request. The case is more than an "unfortunate incident." The points at issue are: 1) the faculty of the seminary has been insisting that the debate is based on two fundamentally different understandings of the Christian Gospel, and that the students' actions constituted heresy, 2) the Administration finally called the police to the campus and brought the three students to trial, 3) by their actions cutting off every possibility of communication between students and teachers.

This reaction toward the student revolt at that time clearly reflects the general thinking of Kyodan even today in terms of its socio-political involvement. Since Kyodan's foundation it has tended always to compromise with the existing political powers and to proclaim somehow a transcendent, authentic Christian faith. As a result it serves merely for preservation of its own institutional existence.

As my personal observation, it is most important to explore the hidden nature of the Seminary Incident among ourselves in Kyodan, not just for accusing each other, but rather for establishing our proper stance on any kind of issue. This is our only chance to make this "unfortunate incident" into a chance to gain insight into our relations with God and with each other.

#### KYOBUNKAN, OR GINZA REVISITED

Four years ago the Japan Christian Center was moved to its present location near Waseda University in Shinjuku. Today a visit to the old "headquarters" in the Kyobunkan and Bible Society buildings on the Ginza is full of surprises. Mikimoto and Tamaya have splendid new buildings, there is an air of newness about the street in general, and the KBK itself sports a new facade and automatic elevator. Even the old Japanese restaurant in the alley next to the Bible Society back entrance has been demolished to be replaced by a new building now under construction. I wonder what happened to the cats we used to see on the roof tiles in the early morning.

But the most vivid impression one gets is from the changes in the Kyobunkan itself. The third floor which used to house the foreign books and a warren of office desks, files, and papers was an empty shell yesterday. In another month it will come back to life as a show room for the Hammond Organ Company accessible by stairway from the Ginza street level entrance. The second floor KBK salesroom is getting new shelves and will be a general bookstore for Japanese publications. The ninth floor now contains Christian literature, including foreign books, and all the offices. One gets the impression of crowding, as before; but more efficiency and higher morale.

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Sales are up by about a third with the new arrangement. The intention is to stock the ninth floor Christian book room with a complete selection of Japanese Christian publications. The foreign books still run heavily to reference volumes and European theology and Biblical studies. The "Books on Japan" section is discontinued for the present but may reappear on the second floor later.

Why all this rearrangement? Financial realities. The student activism of the late 60's, which dealt a heavy blow to book sales, caught the Kyobunkan at a time when it was expanding. Considerable capital outlay had gone into new branches in Sendai, Osaka, Kyoto, and elsewhere. The payroll had gone over a hundred and the employees union was flexing its muscles.

The combination of these and other factors have forced the KBK into a series of belt-tightening measures over the last six years which have reduced the operation to the book store and a little publishing. It is hoped that this last measure will succeed in balancing the scales at last. Rental income and sales income are expected to bring the KBK into the black so that it can resume more of the functions we associate with a Christian literature society. Meanwhile the Christian library which only recently had reappeared on the ninth floor has had to go back into moth balls.

Is there a symbolic quality in the Kyobunkan experience? Are its shrinking pains an inevitable accompaniment to the indigenization process? Or should they be analyzed in the context of secularization? In any case the Kyobunkan is struggling to maintain its life and witness as a Christian entity in the business world.

The next time you are on the Ginza drop in for a look. If you can't buy a Hammond organ, you can afford some Christmas cards or a few books.

--Alden Matthews

#### REVIVAL CRUSADE IN NAGOYA

An unparalleled example of broad-based cooperation among conservative churches in the Nagoya area was recently climaxed by a series of eight evening and two daytime meetings spread over a ten-day period (October 24 -- November 2) at two different locations. Over 90 churches (half from suburban areas) of Alliance, Holiness, Pentecostal, Baptist and Reformed denominations along with a variety of independent churches actively supported this evangelistic effort sparked by Rev. Akira Takimoto of Japan Revival Crusade, the featured evangelist.

Overall attendance totalled over 10,000 for the ten meetings; 1800 were present in the 2300-seat Nagoya Shimin Kaikan on the final night. A total of 650 decisions for the entire Crusade for Christian commitment were recorded during the Crusade. The budget of ¥10,000,000 was met by contributions of participating churches and interested parties as well as by the offerings taken at the meetings.

The invitation to participate in the Crusade was extended only to "evangelical" churches, which did not include Kyodan, Seikokai, or Lutheran churches. However, one Kyodan church was listed as cooperating with the Crusade.

---Clark B. Offner

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The Women's Committee of the National Christian Council of Japan has expressed support of Korean Church Women United in their appeal for aid for Korean victims of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki atomic bombs. "We require the Japanese government to take responsible action towards these Koreans," the statement reads, "because they were victims as a result of past policies of the Japanese government."



TANAKA'S FINANCES --- A poor boy with only an elementary education makes his way into political circles, where he rises to cabinet minister and, while amassing a considerable fortune, finally becomes Prime Minister. It isn't Horatio Alger, but Japan's Kakuei Tanaka, and the means he has used to gain his financial ends are currently raising eyebrows --- and voices --- around Japan.

An expose of the Prime Minister's questionable financial dealings, recently published by the popular monthly *Bungei Shinju*, has provoked violently critical reactions throughout the country. On the floor of the National Diet, opposition leaders have demanded that Tanaka's personal finances be made public along with information on companies which have close connections with the P.M. Even members of Tanaka's own Liberal Democratic Party have joined in the criticism.

At a recent press conference at the Foreign Correspondents' Club Tanaka defended his position, accusing journalists of "confusing private economic activities with public political activities." However, suspicion remains that it is not the journalists who are confused.

Under this cloud Tanaka proceeded on November 11 to reorganize his Cabinet. However, political observers here feel that this is only a holding action which marks the beginning of the end for the Tanaka government. The forecast here is for a major change soon after President Ford leaves the country.

Meanwhile readers observe with interest that the politically explosive issue has been generally avoided by major newspapers and taken up only by the monthly magazines. Political affairs experts at first paid little attention to the *Bungei Shinju* report, and even the author said he did not expect his article to trigger a "Japanese-style Watergate."

COLLISION IN TOKYO BAY --- Over 20 died in Tokyo Bay as a result of the November 9 collision of a Japanese tanker carrying LP gas and a cargo ship under the Liberian flag. Both ships exploded; the tanker continues to be a burning time bomb in the bay. Some compartments of the lighter-than-air LP gas remain unexploded, presenting a continual hazard to fire-fighting crews.

Although errors are suspected on the part of both ships, the incident has raised doubts here about the enforcement of safety procedures by countries like Liberia, whose liberal shipping policies encourage registration of ships from all around the world.

MURDERED BY THE GAS COMPANY? Recently Hokkaido Gas Company has begun to supply homes in most major Hokkaido cities with "high-calorie" gas, higher quality, more condensed, and with increased heating power per liter. Before implementing the change the company did not check individual houses to insure that existing gas-burning appliances would be able to safely handle the new gas; since then, seven people have died in gas accidents where old equipment proved incompatible with the new gas. The debate in Hokkaido is now gaining momentum --- are these accidents due to consumer negligence, or are they the responsibility of the gas company?

ONODA TO LEAVE JAPAN --- Former Imperial Army Lt. Hiroo Onoda, who continued to fight World War II single-handed for thirty years before his return this spring from the Philippines (See JCAN #450, March 22), has announced he will make his permanent home in Brazil. He has a brother there, he says, and besides, "I'm tired of being watched all the time like a panda in the zoo." Perhaps the former lieutenant, who disregarded reports of the war's end and continued to follow his commanding officer's orders to fight for the Emperor, has found present-day Japan far removed from what he was fighting for...